

Alabama Department of Economic and
Community Affairs
Performance Report

Capital Projects Fund
2023 Report

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Executive Summary..... | 2 |
| Uses of Funds..... | 2 |
| Promoting Equitable Outcomes..... | 4 |
| Labor..... | 4 |
| Community Engagement..... | 5 |

Executive Summary

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), will conduct a statewide broadband infrastructure grant program. This CPF Program will fund last-mile infrastructure projects in unserved areas of the state.

The Program Plan incorporates Alabama’s State legislative objectives for broadband deployment, including addressing the needs in unserved areas, overcoming barriers to adoption, incentivizing private investment, demonstrated community support, and promoting racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural and economic diversity. During the reporting period, ADECA has made progress toward these objectives through numerous in-person and virtual outreach events to discuss Alabama’s broadband policies, goals, and programs (including the CPF Program) with a wide variety of partners. In addition, ADECA continues to maintain the Alabama Broadband Map, collecting internet service provider (ISP) availability data semi-annually.

Through these efforts, ADECA has gathered qualitative and quantitative data to inform draft CPF grant program documents that will reflect and support program goals. These documents include the *Alabama Capital Projects Fund Application*, *Alabama Capital Projects Fund Application Guide*, *Alabama Capital Projects Fund Program Guide*, *Alabama Capital Projects Fund Frequently Asked Questions*, and *Alabama Capital Projects Fund Application Ratings Tool*. These documents and others are available here: <https://adeca.alabama.gov/alcapitalprojectsfund/>.

ADECA is leveraging its extensive portfolio of state and federally funded broadband programs—the Alabama Broadband Accessibility Fund (ABAF); Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds; Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD); Digital Equity; and CPF—for effective and efficient use of resources to conduct outreach events and data collection, and to provide broadband services to unserved residents, businesses, and anchor institutions.

Uses of Funds

ADECA’s intended use of funds is to conduct a statewide broadband infrastructure grant program. This program will fund last-mile infrastructure projects in unserved areas of the state that will provide minimum service speeds of symmetrical 100/100 Mbps.

Efforts during this reporting period have focused on community outreach, data analysis, and development of the program design and materials. During this time, Alabama’s Performance and Expenditure Reports have not included data or performance indicators for its approved grant program. Alabama will report on these metrics and data as it implements its grant program and subrecipients begin constructions on their grant-funded projects.

Activities conducted during reporting period include:

- Drafting and acquiring approval of the Program Plan for the CPF Program.
- Updating the Alabama Broadband Map with availability data from ISPs to have current

representation of served and unserved locations in support of the CPF grant program.

- Conducting local, on-site partner outreach in all 67 counties; a residential phone survey; discussions with community organizations, government agencies/departments, tribal entities, and ISPS; and online questionnaires to gather feedback and data on the critical needs of residents, businesses, governments, and underrepresented communities, as well as affordability considerations, learning gaps, and barriers to access. These activities address the CPF Program's goal of continuing to conduct and analyze survey data and member feedback from existing partners, such as AARP, the Alabama Department of Education (including county school districts, community colleges, and HBCUs), Community Action Agencies of Alabama, and others to assess affordability criteria; access to existing programs; and needs for telehealth, distance learning, and work-from-home applications.
- Sharing preliminary information about the CPF Program during the aforementioned outreach with potential applicants and other relevant entities. Information is currently being widely distributed via an established distribution email list and by posting program documents on ADECA's website.

ADECA anticipates conducting the following activities during the next performance period:

- Publish detailed application and program guidance documents on the ADECA website. These documents include the application itself with guidance for completing the application, frequently asked questions, a program guide with reporting and closeout requirements, ratings/scoring criteria information, and a sample grant agreement.
- Conduct a public workshop to discuss the application materials and answer any questions to launch the Program. Record the workshop for posting on the ADECA website.
- Provide non-discriminatory technical assistance to applicants as requested.
- Conduct a transparent and public application review process.
- Adopt and publish an application rating tool that prioritizes projects that will advance the program's objectives or go beyond the minimum requirements.
- Create subaward grant agreements and project guidelines for subrecipients that include annual and quarterly reporting, closeout processes, labor practices, and community engagement guidelines.
- Continue partner outreach and provide opportunities for community feedback to support its quarterly and annual reporting.

As of the reporting period, Alabama is still developing its methods for collecting and measuring success as it develops its program guidelines, grantee reporting criteria, and closeout reporting processes.

At this stage of its program implementation, ADECA has not encountered significant challenges or unexpected obstacles.

At this stage of its program implementation, ADECA has no outcomes related to ancillary costs.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes

During the performance period, ADECA conducted extensive outreach to a diverse set of partners to gather feedback and input on affordability, critical needs, and equity.

Prior to receiving its CPF award, ADECA conducted outreach that included 19 meetings with partner groups, state agencies, and community anchor institutions that serve several underrepresented communities including seniors, low-income households, racial and ethnic minorities, and limited English-speaking residents.

Alabama has continued its outreach and visited all 67 counties in the State. These in-person engagements included information sharing and data gathering with over 1,300 attendees. Other engagements included HBCUs and state-recognized tribes. These meetings were attended by local officials, state agency representatives, community and educational leaders, and internet service providers. These meetings made communities, governments, institutions, and ISPs aware of the different state and federal programs; they will continue into the next reporting period.

ADECA conducted a statewide phone survey of 3,654 residential end users to collect data on access, digital equity/opportunity information, and barriers. ADECA also leveraged the results of a prior phone survey conducted outside the period of performance in December 2021 to 4,841 Alabama residents.

Additional efforts will be included as part of the program documents and will be reported in the next reporting period.

Labor

Through its outreach efforts, ADECA has received feedback from labor unions and workforce development agencies regarding the importance of fair labor standards, local hiring standards, and workforce training opportunities that will contribute to the effective and efficient delivery of high-quality infrastructure projects and also support the critical needs of the communities where these projects will serve for economic development, re-skilled workforce, and opportunities for highly skilled workers. Alabama's Community College system has launched a program for broadband installer certification. This program will be low cost or free. Additional efforts will be included as part of the program documents and will be reported in the next reporting period.

Community Engagement

As discussed above, ADECA's outreach included extensive community engagement during the 67 county meetings, meetings with HBCUs, and meetings with Tribal entities. ADECA is incorporating feedback from community organizations into its program application materials and ratings criteria by providing additional consideration for key elements that these community organizations prioritized. Attendees at these meetings included representatives of ISPs, community colleges, libraries, churches, county and municipal governments, organizations serving covered populations, educational institutions, and many community-based organizations (local, regional, and statewide).

- Alabama's community engagement efforts and activities include:
 - Alabama's preliminary outreach was documented in its Program Plan and included 19 meetings with partner groups, state agencies, and community anchor institutions that serve several underrepresented communities including seniors, low-income households, racial and ethnic minorities, and limited English-speaking residents.
 - Alabama has continued its outreach and visited all 67 counties in the State. These in-person engagements were attended by over 1300 people including local officials, state agency representatives, community and educational leaders, and internet service providers. Specifically, these meetings have included representatives from the local community colleges, workforce development agencies, county administrators, local planning officers, local churches including churches within Black and Hispanic communities, labor union representatives, representatives from local school districts, housing authorities, and community services agencies. Representatives of statewide organizations such as AARP, United Way, the NAACP, and regional planning commissions have also been in attendance.
 - A statewide phone survey of residential end users with 3,654 received responses that have been analyzed by region to provide more community-specific feedback and an online survey of community partners, local governments, and ISPs that produced more than 125 responses regarding barriers and obstacles to broadband access, descriptions of programmatic assets, and proposals for new programs that could meet community needs.
 - Incorporated results of a prior phone survey conducted outside the period of performance in December 2021 to 4,841 Alabama residents.
- For each of these outreach activities, Alabama used a combination of social media, web postings, email campaigns, and direct phone calls to encourage attendance at these meetings

or to support the written and online surveys.

- Additional efforts will be included as part of the program development and will be reported in the next reporting period.

Disclaimer

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number CPFFN0162 awarded to the State of Alabama by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.